

*Conf
B3*

81. The system of claim 74, further including means for connecting a second, separate video gaming device to said combination game/location controller computer for transmitting activity data from said second, separate video gaming device to said combination game/location controller computer.

82. The system of claim 81, wherein said second, separate video gaming device further includes at least one player station and a game computer that is programmed to disable the player station upon receipt of a command communicated from said monitoring computer.

83. The system of claim 74, wherein said first video device further includes an interface device for connecting said plurality of player stations to said combination game/location controller computer.

84. The system of claim 74, wherein said monitoring computer is a remote computer. --

REMARKS

The subject application is the national phase filing under 35 U.S.C. § 371 of International Application No. PCT/ZA99/00085. The subject PCT application was filed on September 14, 1999, and claims priority on U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/100,449, filed September 14, 1998. The amendment to the specification is being made to satisfy the requirements of 37 C.F.R. § 1.78 and thereby formally claim priority on the previously filed provisional application.

Applicants note that the provisions of 35 C.F.R. § 1.78 (a) (1) (ii) regarding waiver of the priority right if not made within 4 months after commencement of the national phase under 35 U.S.C. §

371 do not apply to the subject application. This is because the subject application's international filing date is before November 29, 2000.

It should be noted that in the International Preliminary Examination Report for the subject PCT application, the claimed priority on U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/100,449 was deemed to be invalid as to many of the originally filed 49 claims. However, the priority claim was deemed to valid as to claims that recite communication between a game computer and a central computer. Since all of the new claims are in fact directed to system that involve both a game computer and a monitoring or remote computer, Applicants respectively submit that the priority claim is valid. As a result, Applicants respectively submit that the effective filing date of all of the new claims is September 14, 1998.

In the Office Action, the Examiner has required that new formal drawings be filed herewith because the current drawings are considered informal due to unprofessional hand drawings. Applicants' attorney acknowledges that the drawings are informal but respectively submits that a requirement that formal drawings be filed with this response is improper. Applicantss attorney also acknowledges that the drawing requirements set forth in 35 C.F.R § 1.84 and 1.85, as well as in MPEP § 608.02 (a) and § 608.02 (b) have recently been changed so that if the Examiner notes that the drawings are defective, corrected drawings must be submitted with a response to the Office Action. However, careful reading of the provisions in MPEP § 608.02 (a) and § 608.02 (b), appears to indicate that it is improper for the Examiner to require new formal drawings simply because the original drawings are informal. For example, MPEP § 608.02 (a), states that "if the drawings have been indicated by the Applicant as informal, but no objection has been made to the drawings, the Examiner should not require replacement of the "informal" drawings with new drawings." Further, Form paragraph number 6.26 set forth in

MPEP § 608.02 (b), notes that the Examiner may require new drawings if the informal drawings are not of sufficient quality to permit examination. Both of these statements would appear to indicate that the Examiner should not object to informal drawings solely on the basis that they are informal, but rather should merely note the informalities in a PTO-948 form. Accordingly, Applicants respectively submit that it is not appropriate to require that formal drawings be filed herewith. Applicants do acknowledge, however, that upon subsequent allowance of the application, formal drawings will have to be filed no later than the date on which the issue fee is paid.

With references now to the claim amendments, claims 50-63 have been canceled and replaced with new claims 64-84. These claims cover the embodiments of the subject invention that are discussed beginning on page 35, line 16, in conjunction with FIG. 9. In particular, the claimed embodiments cover video gaming systems that facilitate communication with a monitoring, central or remote computer without a communications device known in the industry as a location controller. Instead, the claimed embodiments of the present invention eliminate the need for a location controller through use of combination game/location controller computer that is employed to operate one of the claimed video gaming devices. As recited in the claims, the combination game/location controller computer is not only programmed to execute a game at one or more player stations, but it is also programmed to receive activity data from a number of player stations and/or other separate video gaming devices and generate an information data stream to be sent the monitoring computer. In the preferred embodiments, the information data stream includes not only the activity data but also identification information that identifies to which of the player stations or video gaming devices the activity data pertains.

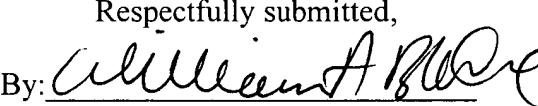
The foregoing arrangement is particularly suited for use in small gaming establishments that do not have a large number of video gaming machines. Location controllers are known standalone devices that facilitate communications between the remote monitoring computer in a casino, for example, and a large number, e.g., 100, video gaming machines. Activity data generated by each machine, such as amount of currency inserted, player selections, unauthorized opening of money doors, etc., is transmitted by each video gaming device to the location controller, which then formats the activity data into an information data stream that can be sent to the remote monitoring computer. Since the location controller receives activity from many gaming devices, it must also send gaming device identification information to the remote monitoring computer with the activity data. In response, the monitoring computer can send instructions to the location controller to be forwarded to one or more of the gaming devices. In smaller establishments that may only have a handful of gaming devices, one would rather not employ an expensive location controller of the type that is able to accommodate communications with 100 or more gaming devices. The claimed invention overcomes this problem through an inexpensive programming modification to a conventional game computer that allows the computer not only to execute a gaming program but also to serve as a location controller that receives activity data from a plurality of player stations and/or video gaming machines and formats the data into an information data stream to be transmitted to the remote monitoring computer.

With reference to the prior art rejections set forth in the Office Action, the rejection over the Vegas Amusement, Incorporated reference is rendered moot in view of the previous priority issue discussion. In particular, the effective filing date of all of the new claims is September 14,

1998, which predates the January 7, 1999 publication date of the cited reference to Vegas Amusement, Inc.

This leaves the rejection over U.S. Patent No. 5,766,076 to Pease et al. Pease et al. discloses a gaming system that in fact employs a prior art location controller arrangement. In particular, the gateway processor 138 serves as a location controller that facilitates communications between a central computer system 106 and plurality of video gaming devices 108a, 108b and 108c. There is no disclosure or suggestion in Pease et al. that the functionality of the gateway processor 138 could be incorporated in a game computer disposed in or connected to one of the gaming devices 108. Accordingly, Applicants respectively submit that claims 64-83 are patentable and allowable over Pease et al. and the references of record since the prior art does not disclose or suggest the foregoing key feature of the claimed invention. In particular, both independent claims 64 and 74 recite a video gaming system in which a video gaming device incorporates a combination game/location controller computer that is programmed both to execute game and to receive activity data from plural player stations and/or gaming devices. Clearly this arrangement is neither disclosed nor suggested in the prior art of record.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 64 and 74, as well as dependent claims 65-73 and 75-84, are patentable and allowable, and that the application is now in condition for allowance. Accordingly, favorable reconsideration respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,
By: 
William A. Blake
Reg. No. 30,548

JONES, TULLAR & COOPER, P.C.
P.O. Box 2266, Eads Station
Arlington, VA. 22202
(703) 415-1500
Dated: October 31, 2002